

*Religion*

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR  
Room 220, 1114 Commerce Street  
Dallas 2, Texas

MEMORANDUM

May 29, 1956

TO: Ed McDonald  
Regional Director

FROM: W. B. McFarland, Regional  
Farm Placement Representative

SUBJECT: Conference with The Executive Secretary, Bishops' Committee for  
the Spanish Speaking and the Bishop of Corpus Christi

In keeping with your instructions of May 16, I called Rev. William D. O'Connor, Executive Secretary of the Bishops' Committee for the Spanish Speaking, San Antonio, and made an appointment to see him on May 23, 1956.

We have furnished Father O'Connor with information regarding locations where "Braceros" were used in 1955 and approximate locations in 1956. Additional information was furnished the Committee by the TEC. The purpose of my visit was to discuss the Catholic Church's interest in the program and assistance that might be given by the Bureau in furthering the spiritual welfare of the workers.

The first subject of our discussion was Art. 23 of the Contract "Protection from Immoral and Illegal Influences." I advised Father O'Connor that the Department of Labor would take immediate steps to revoke the certification of any employer or employer-association which knowingly violated or permitted violations of Art. 23.

Father O'Connor was advised that our field men check central housing units during the seasons to assure that the housing and facilities meet prescribed standards, to check the food being served and to determine if any violation of Art. 23 was being permitted. I explained that due to our limited staff of field men we could not check every central unit or employer regularly and that in the event the Pastors in the area received any information regarding immoral and illegal activities they should immediately notify the appropriate Regional Office; that an investigation would be authorized, completed and necessary action taken. In such instances the Pastor will be advised of the findings and action taken by the Bureau.

We are furnishing Father O'Connor a directory of the Regional Offices so that he may advise the Bishops in the areas where "Braceros" are used of the steps to take when they receive information regarding violations of Art. 23 of the Contract.

Since approximately 98 percent of the "Braceros" are baptized Catholics, the Church is anxious to give them a chance to practice their religion while they are in this country. After considerable discussion of the problem, location of central housing units, location of churches, shortage of Priests and other related problems, I suggested that perhaps we could be of some assistance and



proposed that we contact employer associations in the Lower Rio Grande Valley and attempt to work out some arrangements with the associations and the Pastors in the area, to provide for religious services for the Mexican Nationals. I explained that we could not request or require the associations to take certain actions, however, we could explain the benefits the workers would receive which we believed would also benefit the employers and the community. The proposed plan of operation which will be placed into operation in the Valley on a trial basis is as follows:

We will designate one of our USES Representatives to contact the associations in the Valley which have central housing units. Associations with such units were selected since a larger number of workers can be reached. Those associations desiring to cooperate will be advised that they can take the following action:

1. Install a simple altar with a crucifix in the dining room or in an appropriate location with a kneeling rail. If possible, secure a banner of Our Lady of Guadalupe and install behind the crucifix. Arrange with the Priest in the nearest church to conduct an appropriate ceremony after all the workers have been advised of the date and time of the Priest's visit.
2. Furnish transportation on Sunday for those workers who desire to go to church, providing previous arrangements have been made with the Pastor to assure sufficient seating will be available at the services for the additional people. Many of the churches in the Valley are small and cannot accommodate two or three hundred additional persons at any one service. Perhaps special services can be arranged at the church. Our representative, the association's representative, and the Pastor in the area will have to discuss the problem and agree on the most feasible arrangement.

In the event arrangements cannot be worked out to take the men to the church, the possibility of bringing the church to them at the camp will be discussed and arrangements completed where possible. Arrangements may be made for evening services during the week.

Father O'Connor expressed his approval of the proposal and called the Bishop's Office in Corpus Christi and made an appointment for me to see the Bishop and Monsignor Marx. Since the Valley is in the Corpus Diocese, appropriate information from the Bishop would be necessary to assure the Pastors in the Valley that the plan was approved.

Due to a flight delay in my arriving in Corpus Christi I did not get to talk to Bishop Garriga who had waited over thirty minutes to see me. I expressed my apologies for being late for the appointment to Monsignor Marx and outlined my discussion with Father O'Connor and our desire to assist wherever possible. The Monsignor made notes on each point and advised that a letter from the Bishop would be sent to all parishes in the Valley not later than May 25. The letter would outline the plan and advise the Pastors that Mr. Bernard V. Fox, USES Representative stationed in McAllen, would contact them regarding the program.

Mr. Fox was in Dallas yesterday and I outlined in detail the plan of operation. Mr. Fox understands that under no circumstances will any pressure be put on



the associations by the Department to force them to cooperate with the workers and the Church. He will simply outline the proposal and point out the benefits to the workers and the community. He will stress the importance of Art. 23 of the contract and assist the association in making necessary arrangements where possible. Action taken by the associations must be strictly voluntary.

The possibility of some opposition to our participating in the program by other religious denominations was discussed with Mr. Fox. He was advised that we are cooperating with the Catholic Church since the majority of the "Braceros" are of that faith. However, we are not limiting our assistance and cooperation. We will render any services possible to any denomination providing there are "Braceros" of that faith in the camps and the association makes necessary arrangements agreeable to the workers and the church of their choice.

Mr. Fox will make weekly reports direct to this office with a copy to the McAllen area office. If the program is accepted by the workers and the associations in the Valley, we can use the experience gained to expand the program to other areas in Texas and Arkansas this fall during the cotton harvest.

After the season is completed in December we will be in a position to furnish the Bureau and the Bishops' Committee a report of action taken and results. If the plan is successful, and I believe it will be, the Bureau may wish to furnish the other Regional Offices where Mexican Nationals are usually employed information regarding the plan and suggest that similar action be taken in those regions.

Father O'Connor assured me that the Most Reverend Robert E. Lucey, Archbishop of San Antonio and Executive Chairman of the Bishops' Committee, would be advised of our interest in the spiritual welfare of the Mexican workers.